

Talking Points **The Criteria and Calculations for** **Absolute Ratings and Improvement Ratings** **(School Districts)**

These talking points provide general information on how the Absolute and Improvement Ratings are calculated for school districts. To obtain more technical and specific information on school and district ratings, refer to the Annual Accountability Manual available on the EOC Web site at www.sceoc.org.

- South Carolina's education accountability system centers around one fundamental belief: **ALL children can achieve.**
- The system uses academic achievement standards to push schools and students toward higher performance and focuses on improving teaching and learning so students are equipped with a strong academic foundation.
- Every student is held to the same high standards, and every school and school district is accountable for each of its students.
- The system is designed to evaluate annually the progress of each school and school district.
- The 2010 goal states, "South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country." The goal is used to establish expectations.
- Continuous improvement is the key to meeting South Carolina's 2010 achievement goal. The ratings system is constructed to increase in rigor over time. The target for individual student performance established by the State Board of Education is a score of Proficient. Proficient means the student has met expectations and is well prepared for work at the next grade.

Basic information:

- Each school district receives two performance ratings and notification of AYP:
 - Absolute Rating** – based on the level of performance of all schools in the district on measures of student success during the school year on which the report card is based.
 - Improvement Rating** – based on the progress of all schools in the district toward attaining and/or maintaining higher levels of performance on measures of student success from year to year.
 - Adequate Yearly Progress** – As required by the United States Department of Education through passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation, a notice about the district's status of adequate yearly progress is provided. AYP specifies statewide targets for all students in each student subgroup: racial/ethnic, economic, disability, limited English proficiency, and migrant status. **(Contact the State Department of Education for Information on AYP.)**
- Five terms are used in the ratings to describe the level of a district's performance:
 - Excellent** – District performance substantially exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.
 - Good** – District performance exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.
 - Average** – District performance meets the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.
 - Below Average** – District is in jeopardy of not meeting the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.
 - Unsatisfactory** – District performance fails to meet the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

What criteria are used to calculate ratings for school districts?

- Same criteria used to calculate ratings for schools enrolling students in grades 3 - 8 and high schools (grades 9 - 12).

Which students are included in school district ratings?

- Students in grades 3 - 12 who were enrolled in the district by the 45th day and at the time of testing, even if they attended different schools within the district are included in the Absolute Rating.
- Students included in the district's Improvement Rating are: students in grades 3 - 8 who were enrolled in the district by the 45th day and at the time of testing; who can be matched to the previous year; who have PACT scores for both years, even if they attended different schools within the district or a school in a different district during the previous year; and high school students in grades 10 and 12.
- Students taking alternate assessments are included only in the district's ratings.
- English Language Learners (students with limited English proficiency) are tested in accordance with federal guidelines.

How are Absolute Ratings calculated for school districts?

- Ratings are calculated using a mathematical formula that results in an index.
- The index is calculated using the following procedures:
 - Step 1** – Calculate an index using PACT performance of district students in grades 3 - 8 using the same mathematical formula for calculating an Absolute Rating for schools enrolling students in grades 3- 8.
 - Step 2** – Calculate an index using performance of district students in grades 9 - 12 using the mathematical formula for calculating an Absolute Rating index for schools enrolling students in grades 9 - 12.
 - Step 3** – Multiply the grades 3 - 8 index by the student enrollment in grades 3 - 8 (135-day average daily membership ADM).
 - Step 4** – Multiply the grades 9 - 12 index by the student enrollment in grades 9 - 12 (135-day ADM).
 - Step 5** – Add the products from steps 3 and 4. Divide this sum by the total 135-day ADM for grades 3-12. Round the resulting index to the nearest tenth.

■ The resulting index determines the district's Absolute Rating as follows:

Range of Indices Corresponding to Absolute Rating					
Year	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unsatisfactory
2004	3.5 and above*	3.1-3.4*	2.7-3.0	2.3-2.6	Below 2.3
2005	3.6 and above*	3.2-3.5*	2.8-3.1	2.4-2.7	Below 2.4
2006	3.7 and above*	3.3-3.6*	2.9-3.2	2.5-2.8	Below 2.5
2007	3.8 and above*	3.4-3.7*	3.0-3.3	2.6-2.9	Below 2.6
2008	3.9 and above*	3.5-3.8*	3.1-3.4	2.7-3.0	Below 2.7
2009	4.0 and above*	3.6-3.9*	3.2-3.5	2.8-3.1	Below 2.8
2010	4.1 and above*	3.7-4.0*	3.3-3.6	2.9-3.2	Below 2.9
2011	4.2 and above*	3.8-4.1*	3.4-3.7	3.0-3.3	Below 3.0
2012	4.3 and above*	3.9-4.2*	3.5-3.8	3.1-3.4	Below 3.1
2013	4.4 and above*	4.0-4.3*	3.6-3.9	3.2-3.5	Below 3.2
2014	4.5 and above*	4.1-4.4*	3.7-4.0	3.3-3.6	Below 3.3

*School districts must meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria for all students in each subject area and for percent tested.

Step 6 – For school districts with Excellent or Good Absolute Rating indices, determine if Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for *all* students has been met.

The index (step 5) determines the school district's Absolute Rating; however, school districts with an Absolute Rating of Excellent or Good will decrease one rating category if they have not met AYP for *all* students. For example, if a school district had an index of 3.5 in 2004 but did not make AYP for *all* students, its rating would be lowered from Excellent to Good. Or if a school district in 2004 had an index of 3.1 but did not make AYP for *all* students, its rating would be lowered from Good to Average.

Here is a sample calculation of an Absolute Rating for a school district:

Step 1:

Student Grade Level	Absolute Index	x	District ADM	=	Sum of Absolute Index X the ADM
Grades 3 - 8	2.9	x	12,532	=	36342.8
Grades 9 - 12	3.0	x	6,621	=	19863.0
Totals			19,153		56205.8

Step 2: Calculating the Index

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} \text{Sum of Absolute Index X ADM} & \div & \text{Total ADM} & = & \text{District Absolute Index} \\ 56205.8 & \div & 19,153 & = & 2.934 \end{array}$$

Rounded to the nearest tenth of a percentage 2.9

Absolute Rating: Average

Note: This school district's index of 2.9 earns an Average Absolute Rating through the year 2006. From 2007 through 2010, an index of 2.9 earns Below Average, and from 2011-2014, the index earns Unsatisfactory.

Met AYP? Yes/No

If this school district's index had been an Excellent or Good rating, AYP must be met for all students to maintain the rating. If AYP is not met for all students, the Excellent or Good rating decreases one level.

How are Improvement Ratings calculated for school districts?

- The improvement ratings are calculated using a mathematical formula that results in an index.
- The index is calculated by using the same criteria and formula for calculating the improvement ratings for students in grades 3 – 8 and for students in grades 9 – 12 as follows:

Step 1: Calculate the improvement rating index with PACT scores for qualifying students in grades 3 through 8 within the district using the same Improvement Rating formula for schools enrolling students in grades 3 through 8.

Step 2: Calculate an improvement rating index for the performance of qualifying students in grades 9 through 12 within the district using the same Improvement Rating formula for schools enrolling students in grades 9 through 12.

Step 3: Multiply the index for grades 3 through 8 by the district's student enrollment for grades 3 through 8. Enrollment for grades 3 – 8 is the 135-day Average Daily Membership or ADM.

Step 4: Multiply the index for grades 9 through 12 by the district's ADM for students in grades 9 through 12.

Step 5: Add the numbers from Step 3 and Step 4, divide the sum by the district's total ADM for students in grades 3-12, and round to the nearest tenth of a point.

- The resulting index determines the Improvement Rating in accordance with the following values:

Rating	Improvement Index
Excellent	0.4 or greater
Good	0.3
Average	0.1-0.2
Below Average	0.0
Unsatisfactory	-0.1 or less

Here is a sample calculation of an Improvement Rating for a school district:

Step 1: Calculate the sum of the products of the Improvement Rating index times the ADM for grades 3 - 8 schools and high schools and the total ADM for grades 3 - 12.

Student Grade Levels	Improvement Index	x	District ADM	=	
Grades 3 - 8	0.183	x	12,532	=	2293.356
Grades 9 - 12	0.124	x	6,621	=	821.004
	Totals		19,153		3114.360

Step 2: Calculate the district's Improvement Rating Index

(Sum of Improvement Index X ADM) ÷ Total ADM = District Improvement Rating Index

$$\begin{aligned} 3114.360 \div 19153.0 &= 0.162 \\ \text{Round to nearest tenth of a percentage} &= \mathbf{0.2 \text{ index}} \end{aligned}$$

Improvement Rating: Average

Adjustments to the Improvement Rating:

■ A school district's Improvement Rating is adjusted upwards one rating level, for example from Average to Good or from Good to Excellent, if it has experienced exceptional achievement gains among students belonging to demographic groups which have historically underachieved in South Carolina schools (HUGS). This adjustment to the Improvement Rating is intended to recognize and reward schools which are effectively reducing the achievement gap.

HUGS are specific groups of students who historically have not achieved as well as the majority student group. HUGS include African-American students, Hispanic students, Native American students, students participating in the free or reduced price federal lunch program and students with non-speech disabilities.

The gain for the identified groups must be at least one standard deviation higher than the achievement gain for all students statewide. If a school district accomplishes this achievement, a notice is printed on the front page of its report card immediately below the Improvement Rating.

■ Improvement Ratings for school districts sustaining high achievement are established as follows:

- School districts maintaining an Excellent Absolute Rating for two consecutive years receive a Good Improvement Rating, and if the school district's Improvement Rating index for all students is a positive number (e.g., greater than zero), the school district's Improvement Rating will be elevated to Excellent.
- School districts achieving an Absolute Rating index of 4.8 or higher for two consecutive years will be awarded an Excellent Improvement Rating.